Seasonable Advi

TO THE

SOCIETIES

FOR

Reformation of Manners.

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

LONDON:

Printed for *Brab. Aylmer*, at the *Three Pigeons* againſt the *Royal Exchange* in *Cornhill*. MDCXCIX.

170 (3)
Sell

Seaſonable Advice

TO THE

SOCIETIES

FOR

Reformation of Manners.

THOUGH there are large Complaints againſt the Debauchery of the preſent Age; yet, bleſſed be God, Wickedneſs is ſo far from being eſtabliſhed by a Law, that the ſtricteſt Legal Methods are employed to reſtrain it.

999873

His Majeſty doth not only diſcountenance Vice, by the virtuous Example of his own Sacred Perſon, but alſo by his Authority, in the *Letters*, *Proclamations*, and repeated *Orders*, iſſued thereupon. But, *Quid Leges ſine Moribus?* — The beſt conſtituted Laws will be of no uſe without a due Execution.

If the Penalties of our Laws, through the Cowardice or Contrivance of Inferior Magiſtrates, ſhall not be inflicted; Offenders will ſoon be inſolent, but never reformed.

This very Conſideration hath awakened the Zeal of many

many Pious Perſons; Who out of a due ſenſe of their Duty to God and their Country, are deſigning a Method to reform theſe Abuſes.

The Undertaking of theſe worthy Gentlemen is explained and vindicated by a much abler Pen. Thoſe who are ignorant of the Deſign, may pleaſe to conſult a late Tract with this Title: *An Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in* LONDON *and* WESTMINSTER, *&c.* Publiſhed with the Approbation of a conſiderable Number of the *Lords Spiritual* and *Temporal*, and Honou-

rable *Judges*. Printed for *B. Aylmer*.

I ſhall not enlarge in commendation of ſo generous a Work. But ſhall leave that ſatisfaction to God and their own Conſcienees. Amidſt all thoſe checks and diſcouragements which they meet with in a degenerate Age, may they ſtill be ſupported with this Teſtimony of their Conſciences, *That in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity they have had their converſation in the world.* And may all their toilſome Labours in the Cauſe of God and Religion, be finally rewarded in the pronouncing

cing of that Bleſſed Sentence, *Well done, good and faithful ſervant*; —*enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

And that they may not fail of this Bleſſed Reward in the next World (though they muſt expect their ſhare of Troubles in this) I ſhall with a faithful plainneſs mind them of their Duty in theſe *four* Inſtances. 1. *Innocency*. 2. *Induſtry*. 3. *Courage*. 4. *Caution*.

1. *Innocency*. By which word I only denote, *A Freedom from thoſe Vices which they reprove in others.*

For he who is guilty of thoſe Crimes which he pretends to correct, doth inevitably expoſe both his Perſon and his Cauſe. It being a noted Obſervation, That the Reproofs of a Guilty Man are both Undecent and Ineffectual.

Firſt, It is very *Undecent* that *Vice ſhould correct Sin.* And when thoſe who are tardy themſelves, will preſume to be medling, there are Proverbs againſt ſuch Reformers, and very ſevere ones. The Expoſtulation of St. *Paul* is ſharp and pungent, *Thou therefore*

which

which teacheth another, teacheſt thou not thy ſelf? Thou that ſayeſt a man ſhould not commit adultery, doſt thou commit adultery? And ſo in any other inſtance as the Caſe may require.

But ſuch Reproofs are not only *Undecent*, but alſo for the moſt part,

2. *Ineffectual.* And are ſo far from being regarded, or making any Impreſſion in order to amendment, that they only exaſperate and gall their guilt. For Man is naturally a proud Creature; and as ſuch is moſt impatient of Contradiction and Reproof.

Thoſe who are unable to vindicate themſelves, will recriminate their Accuſers. And if they can but find the leaſt ſuſpicion of Guilt, they will not ſpare them; but will contrive to expoſe them, with as much ſcorn and contempt as rage and malice can ſuggeſt.

And in this the Devil, that great Accuſer of the Brethren, will not fail to aſſiſt them. For that *roaring Lyon, who walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour*, is moſt inveterate and outragious againſt thoſe pious good Men, thoſe lovers of Souls, who are active and induſtrious to pluck the Prey

Prey out of his Teeth. And if by all his enſnaring Arts and Temptations he can ſo far prevail over the Weakneſs of Human Nature, as to make them guilty of ſome ſcandalous Practice; he will then triumph in their Fall: And having thus expoſed them to Publick Cenſure, he will quench and divert their former Zeal, and make them uſeleſs to the World.

Be not therefore confident of your own Strength. *Be not high-minded, but fear.* And let it be your daily Prayer to the God of all Grace, *to make you perfect, ſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, ſettle you,*

you, 1 Pet. 5. 10. *That ye may be blameleſs and harmleſs, the ſons of God without rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Nation, among whom ye ſhine as lights in the world*, Phil. 2. 15.

Another Inſtance I will take the freedom to remind you of is,

2. *Induſtry*. You cannot but be ſenſible that there is a toil and fatigue in your preſent Undertaking: And it will coſt ſome Pains and Drudging to perfect your Deſign. And therefore 'tis prudence to ſit down at the firſt, and count the Coſt. To conſider, how far you

are

are inclined to deny your ſelves for the ſake of God and your Duty. Whether you are contented to part with your Eaſe and your Pleaſure; and perhaps in ſome inſtance, your Profit alſo for the benefit of others.

But I will not enforce this Topick any further. For I do not ſuſpect your Sincerity in the Caſe. I know you are truly ſenſible, that we are not born to enjoy our ſelves, by gratifying our ſenſual Inclinations; but that we are obliged to govern our Paſſions and Appetites by Reaſon, and then to be active

and

and diligent for the benefit of others. To be willing on all occasions to do what good we can; and according to our Power and Capacity to be useful to the World. For this Life is only a State of Probation and Trial, in order to the next. And for your encouragement, let me remind you, That they who have done the greatest Service to God in this World, and improved their Time and Talents to the best advantage, and have done the most good to Mankind; such Persons are qualified for the greatest Rewards, for the richest and brightest Crowns.

Imi-

Imitate therefore your *Bleſſed* Saviour, *who went about doing good:* And with unwearied diligence ſollicited the Reformation of the moſt obſtinate Sinners. And though the World may hate and malign, cenſure and oppoſe you, as a ſort of over-buſie pragmatical People; Yet *be of good comfort*, our *B.* Saviour he hath *overcome the world. Conſider him who endured* ſo many Affronts, and ſo much *contradiction of Sinners againſt himſelf, leſt you be weary and faint in your minds.* Which brings me to my *Third* Inſtance or Qualification,

3. *Cou-*

3. *Courage.* By which I denote, *A firmneſs and reſolution of mind, not to be daunted with any Oppoſition.* The which Heroic Temper is little leſs than neceſſary in the preſent Caſe. For be aſſured, the Devil and his Inſtruments will be very active and ſollicitous to baffle your Deſign, and to make it abortive. Be not you therefore wanting in a decent briskneſs to countermine and ſupplant them. And though you may ſometimes meet with unſeaſonable Rebukes, and may be clouded with the frowns of Debauched Greatneſs; yet fear not the Face of Men;

For

For greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. You have not only the Authority of his Majeſty, and the Laws on your ſide; But, which is far more encouraging, the Power and Providence of God to ſupport you. And *if God be for you, who can be againſt you?*

However, ſince Zeal is an active Principle, and like Fire, is very deſtructive when it exceeds its Bounds; that *Yours* may be regular, and governed by Prudence, I ſhall proceed to my *Fourth* Particular, *viz.*

4. *Cau-*

4. *Caution.* Which I will take the freedom to commend to you in these following Instances.

1. Avoid *Popularity.* Do not value your Selves upon the Character of Reformers. Such a Conceit may not only degenerate into Spiritual Pride, and as such be destructive to your own Souls; but also will expose you to the Observation of Detractors, who will enviously remark, not only your most innocent Actions, but also your very Looks and Gestures; whereby if they do not divert you from your Design, and tempt

tempt you to *follow a multitude to do evil*; they will at leaſt be very troubleſome and uneaſie to you.

In Publick Converſation therefore, and in promiſcuous Company (unleſs you have the Aſcendant, and can by your Authority turn the ſtream of Diſcourſe as you pleaſe) be not too frequent in your Complaints; or in making obſervations on the wickedneſs of others. For all Truths are not to be ſpoken at all Times, nor in all Companies. *Caſt not Pearls before Swine*, was the Admonition of our B. Saviour; and is a full proof of what I now ſuggeſt.

ſuggeſt. Intimating; That there are Seaſons when the greateſt Offenders are not to be reproved; but muſt be let alone till a more favourable Juncture.

2. Avoid *Affectation* in your Language, or in your Looks. Do not ſtudy a *Shibboleth*, or a ſet of affected Phraſes. Be manly in your Converſation. Speak and look like Men. And by ſuch Maſculine and acceptable Behaviour, *cut off occaſion from thoſe who deſire occaſion againſt you.*

3. Be *Moderate* in your Proceedings. Be not raſh and violent in your Methods of Reformation. Be con-

contented to go on gently, and by degrees: And according to our blunt Proverb, *Drive the Nail as it will go.* Be not discouraged, though you cannot instantly amend all that is amiss. To correct Abuses is a Work of Time and Patience. Do what Good you can at present; and silently bewail what you cannot yet amend. And then be assured, that God who knows our weakness, and the Difficulties you struggle with, will graciously accept the *Will* for the *Deed.*

4. Be *Unanimous.* Let not Difference in Opinion disorder

order your Proceedings. *Churchmen* and *Diſſenters* (as for diſtinction-ſake I am forced to call them) do both honeſtly join in this good Work.

It were indeed heartily to be wiſhed, that theſe diſtinguiſhing Names were utterly aboliſhed: That all Proteſtants were perfectly united. And O that ſuch an Expedient could be found as might effectually do it. We hope and breath for it. In *th' Interim*, let not the Devil (who ſeeks the ruin of you both) make advantage of your Diviſions. Why may not thoſe who differ in Judgment, be u-

nited

nited in Affection? And therefore (to expreſs my ſelf in Military Language) though we are differently Regimented, yet let us all unanimouſly fight under one General, *the Captain of our Salvation*, to deſtroy the Devil's Kingdom. *Be ſtrong and of a good Courage. And the God of Peace ſhall bruiſe Satan under your feet ſhortly.*

Finally, Brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace ſhall be with you.

FINIS.

Books Printed for B. Aylmer.

A Method of Daily Devotion fitted to the meaneſt Capacities; in 24°. *Price* 2 d.

A Method of Devotion for the Lord's-Day; fitted to the meaneſt Capacities, in 24°. *Price* 2 d.

A Diſcourſe againſt Drunkenneſs, Swearing and Curſing; in 24°. *Price* 2 d.

A Brief Exhortation to the Holy Communion, with the Nature and Meaſure of Preparation concerning it; in 24°. *Price* 2 d.

Theſe four by the Reverend Dr. Aſſheton.

A Perſuaſive to Frequent Communion in the holy Sacrament of the Lords Supper: by his Grace *John* late Lord Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*; the 13th Edit. 8°. *Price* 3 d.

A Familiar Guide to the right and profitable Receiving of the Lord's Supper, wherein alſo the Way and Method of our Salvation is briefly and plainly Declar'd, ſuitably applied, and fit to be annexed to the Chriſtian Moniter. By *Theoph. Dorrington.* 12°. *Pr.* 4 d.

Theſe are the Prizes ſingle; but cheaper to thoſe who are ſo Charitable to give away Numbers.